

GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF THE CHAPTER

Meridian Chapter U.D., Royal Arch Masons.

Roseburg, Oregon

Article I. THE EUROPEAN CONCEPT

- (1) This Chapter shall aspire to adhere to the European Concept.
- (2) This Chapter defines the European Concept as *“a philosophical approach to Freemasonry designed to attract and retain members, centered around a strict adherence and commitment to the Seven Guiding Principles of Traditional Freemasonry, which are:*
 - 1st— Arts and Education.*
 - 2nd— Ritual Excellence.*
 - 3rd— The Festive Board or Meal of Fellowship.*
 - 4th— Masonic Relevance.*
 - 5th— Elegance of Dress.*
 - 6th— Ambiance and Initiatic Focus.*
 - 7th— Selectivity and Exclusivity.”*
- (3) These seven guiding principles shall be further developed and explained in the remaining articles of this document.
- (4) In our adherence to the principles of the European Concept and Traditional Freemasonry, no intentional deviation from the ritual forms prescribed and approved by the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Oregon shall be permitted.
- (5) The provisions in this article may not be repealed, amended, or altered in any respect except by order of the Grand High Priest or the Grand Chapter.

Article II. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF THE CHAPTER, HOW IMPLEMENTED

- (1) The members of this Chapter, under direction of Excellent High Priest, shall maintain this document, entitled “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter,” according to the provisions set forth in paragraphs seven (7) through twelve (12) of this Article.
- (2) It is hereby acknowledged and reaffirmed that in all matters concerning the government and operation of this Chapter, the Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Oregon, the approved By-Laws of this Chapter, and the edicts of the Most Excellent Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Oregon shall take precedence in every respect over the “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter.”
- (3) All petitioners for the degrees of Capitular Masonry and all members seeking affiliation with this Chapter shall receive and thoroughly review a current copy of the “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” prior to petitioning the Chapter. If, after review, the petitioner finds himself amicable to the essence of the precepts contained therein, he shall be invited to sign a statement to that affect, as set forth in paragraph four (4) of this Article, and if not, he shall be advised to consider petitioning another Chapter, that harmony may prevail. Because this Chapter is dedicated to the progress of Capitular Masonry everywhere, such a referral shall be seen as a step towards building stronger fraternal bonds, and shall never be construed as a “rejection” nor permitted to reflect negatively upon the quality or ideals of any Mason.

- (4) Petitioners shall be invited to sign the following statement:

“I firmly declare upon my honor as a good man and Mason that I have thoroughly reviewed the current version of the Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter and, upon reflection, have found myself to be amicable to the essence of the precepts contained therein.

I understand in making this declaration that it is not necessary for me to agree in every minor point or nuance with the guidelines, provided that I have found the greater portion of them to be favorable and that I am willing to support the European Concept as specified therein by Article I.

I further understand that, if I am elected for membership in this Chapter, it will become my right and duty to offer my opinion from time-to-time concerning the future development of these Guidelines, and that I will be expected by my brethren to take the recommendations contained therein into due consideration in all decisions which I might hereafter make appertaining to the work of this Chapter, to the best of my ability.”

- (5) The Secretary shall keep in the archives of the Chapter a copy of all statements signed and dated according to paragraphs three (3) and four (4) of this Article.
- (6) A dated copy of the current “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” ought to be present at every Stated Convocation of the Chapter, and shall be made available for the review of any Mason upon request.
- (7) The “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” ought to express the collective philosophy of the officers and members of the Chapter on how it is to operate, and differ from the By-Laws in that they do not constitute Law binding upon the Chapter, but serve as formal advisory recommendations to the candidates, members, and officers of the Chapter. This document shall be regularly reviewed and updated.
- (8) Amendments or revisions to the “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” may be read and adopted by a two-thirds vote at any stated convocation, provided that the Excellent High Priest has announced the proposed revision at the previous stated convocation, or that the Secretary has notified each member of such intentions at least seven (7) days in advance.
- (9) All proposed amendments or revisions to the “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” must be submitted to the Excellent High Priest and Secretary in writing, and brought before the body of the Chapter for discussion during a stated convocation, before being put to a vote.
- (10) The Secretary shall maintain a complete record of all revisions made to the “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” in the archives of the Chapter, including a dated copy of each version of the Guidelines which has been approved.
- (11) Article I and Article II may not be renumbered, and the provisions in these two articles may not be repealed, amended, or altered in any respect except by order of the Grand High Priest or the Grand Chapter.
- (12) Except as specified in paragraph eleven (11) of this Article, the ability of the members of the Chapter to repeal, amend, revise, delete, reorder, or renumber Articles in the “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter,” or to insert new Articles therein, according to the procedure set forth in paragraphs eight (8) and nine (9) of this Article may not be restricted.

Article III. THE SEVEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL FREEMASONRY

- (1) **The Pillar of Wisdom—Arts and Education:** The creativity and productivity of each member in the liberal arts and sciences should be earnestly cultivated. Masonic education should be part of every function. If there is not an original presentation available for a particular event, a reading may be taken from the vast array of literature pertaining to Royal Arch Masonry or Freemasonry in general.
- (2) **The Pillar of Strength—Ritual Excellence:** The ritualistic work of the Chapter should not only be memorized, but also be artfully delivered by those performing it. Members will be expected to become proficient in the ritual, and candidates will be expected to demonstrate proficiency in the lecture and obligation of each degree before the next may be conferred.
- (3) **The Pillar of Beauty—The Festive Board:** At every stated convocation there should be just as much emphasis placed on the festive board as there is on the business, ritual, and education of our companions. Whether it is a potluck, a banquet, or a visit to a local restaurant, the Festive Board will be conducted with dignity, and members will be expected to attend and participate in the good food and fellowship.
- (4) **Masonic Relevance:** We must ensure that all Chapter functions are relevant to Masonry. There will be no fund raisers except those which provide some legitimate and valuable form of Masonic advancement. Every function of the Chapter should be designed to help individual brethren and companions to improve themselves in Masonry.
- (5) **Elegance of Dress:** Our clothing is an outward symbol and reminder of our devotion to the highest standards of Masonic excellence, and the same amount of care and dignity should be given to our dress in Chapter as for a wedding, funeral, or other significant life event. The Sentinel will enforce the Chapter dress code specified in Article V, under direction of the Excellent High Priest.
- (6) **Ambiance and Initiatic Focus:** Ambiance helps open the heart and soul to receive what Masonry has to offer. Just as our dress should be elegant, our meeting locations should also be as pleasant as possible. We may not always have the best locations, but we should do what we can to make them comfortable and enjoyable. Freedom from unnecessary noise and interruption, the provision of music during refreshment, and appropriate candle-light (if permitted by the venue), are examples of good ambiance.
- (7) **Selectivity and Exclusivity:** A European Concept body is a big commitment, and isn't suitable for everyone. We are dedicated to bringing in only those who are amicable towards these principles, and we will cheerfully recommend anyone wishing to become a Royal Arch Mason to a neighboring Chapter if they are not interested in meeting our strict requirements. We are trying to provide a unique, focused experience for those who are interested in it, and at the same time, project a positive image for both Royal Arch Masonry and Freemasonry in general. We are not desperate for membership, and never should be. If there aren't at least Twelve Royal Arch Masons committed to these principles, then this Chapter should not exist. We must guard the "west gate" of this very unique Chapter so that these principles do not get subverted. We are trying to complement the existing programs, not compete with them, and to show this, our affiliate members should be encouraged to remain active in their existing Chapters, and our new members should be encouraged to affiliate with another nearby Chapter.

Article IV. QUALITY AND EXPENSE

- (1) It is recognized that a high quality program will result in high quality members. A high quality program will make our members more likely to invite other Masons to participate with us.
- (2) It is further recognized that a high quality program will cost money to operate. Therefore, dues must be commensurate with this fact. The members of the Chapter will be expected to help fund its operations without resorting to non-Masonically-relevant fund raising efforts.

Article V. CHAPTER DRESS CODE

- (1) Our standard dress shall consist of a tuxedo, with a black jacket, red bow-tie, red vest, white pocket square, and white gloves without other ornamentation.
- (2) The red chapter blazer should only be worn by visiting District Deputies, Grand Officers, and Past Grand Officers. Everyone else, with the exception of current candidates or special guests, will be expected to wear our standard dress.
- (3) For the sake of uniformity, Grand Officers or Past Grand Officers who hold membership in this Chapter should give preference to wearing our standard dress if permitted to do so by the Most Excellent Grand High Priest.
- (4) Candidates and special guests should be instructed to wear a tuxedo or dark business suit, but they are not expected to wear the red bow-tie or red vest. Candidates should not wear the red bow-tie or vest until after Exaltation.
- (5) New members should be directed prior to Exaltation or Affiliation as to where they may obtain these items for a modest price.
- (6) No lapel pins should be worn except the Past High Priest emblem, official pins or badges of the Grand Chapter or of the current Grand High Priest, or honorary emblems which appertain specifically to Royal Arch Masonry.
- (7) This standard of dress shall be maintained at all Meridian Chapter functions unless otherwise specified by the High Priest.

Article VI. PROGRESSION OF CANDIDATES

- (1) No candidate of this Chapter shall receive more than one degree on the same day without a favorable vote of the Chapter having been obtained at a prior stated convocation.
- (2) No candidate of this Chapter shall be exalted to the degree of Royal Arch Mason without submitting a "piece of work for inspection," (such as a research paper, lecture, or proficiency examination on the preceding degrees) and having it deemed suitable by the unanimous decision of the three duly appointed Masters of the Veils, or in their absence, by a two-thirds secret ballot of the members of the Chapter, unless this requirement has been waived by a two-thirds vote at a prior stated convocation.

Article VII. AFFILIATION

Every member seeking affiliation shall first appear at a convocation of the Chapter and ought to submit a "piece of work for inspection" (such as a research paper, lecture, or proficiency examination on one or more of the Capitular Degrees) before being balloted upon.

Article VIII. ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

Officers ought to be elected and appointed according to the best interests of the Craft, based on individual competency and merit, not merely to follow the custom of advancement in line.

Article IX. DUTIES OF THE ELECTIVE AND APPOINTIVE OFFICERS

- (1) In addition to the duties set forth in the Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Chapter, the By-Laws of this Chapter, the Ritual, and the charges given at Installation, the Officers of this Chapter shall attend to the duties set forth in the following Articles.
- (2) It is understood and recognized that not every member will be capable of performing every task. It is for this reason that the officers are typically placed in a supervisory position. It is the duty of each officer to see that the tasks placed under his care are carried into completion. This duty should normally be fulfilled by delegation to one or more suitably qualified Companions.
- (3) It is expected that the officers will perform their prescribed duties of their own accord and initiative, without requiring to be told to do so by the Excellent High Priest, and that they will ask their superior officers for any further instruction or assistance that is needed.

Article X. DUTIES OF THE EXCELLENT HIGH PRIEST

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Excellent High Priest to oversee the education of the craft, and to promote the cultivation of the seven liberal arts and sciences among its members, as described in paragraph one (1) of Article III, with assistance from the Principal Sojourner.
- (2) To offer prayer extemporaneously at the opening and closing of Chapter, or delegate the same.
- (3) To form or continue the "Committee on Guidelines," and cause this committee to review the "Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter" at least once annually.
- (4) The High Priest shall, at his own pleasure, delegate all tasks pertaining to the Ritualistic Work of the Chapter to the King, or in his absence, to the Scribe.
- (5) The High Priest shall, at his own pleasure, delegate all tasks pertaining to the Festive Board to the Scribe, or in his absence, to the King.
- (6) That he may focus on performing his duties as the spiritual and executive head of the Chapter, the High Priest shall, at his own pleasure, delegate all menial work such as the preparation and clean-up of the Chapter room to the Principal Sojourner, and all written work to the Secretary.

Article XI. DUTIES OF THE KING

- (1) It shall be the duty of the King to ensure that the ritualistic work and proficiency of the craft is tended to, as described in paragraph two (2) of Article III, aided by the Captain of the Host and the Royal Arch Captain.
- (2) The King should rely on the Captain of the Host to more directly supervise the work of the various degrees, and upon the Royal Arch Captain to more directly supervise the instruction of the candidates.
- (3) The King shall be present at every convocation of the Chapter, and shall report any necessary absence, well in advance, to the Excellent High Priest.

Article XII. DUTIES OF THE SCRIBE

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Scribe to ensure that the Festive Board for each stated convocation is properly planned and conducted, as described in paragraph three (3) of Article III, aided by the Three Masters of the Veils.
- (2) The Scribe should rely on the three Masters of the Veils to carry out the work of preparation and clean-up relative to the Festive Board.
- (3) The Scribe shall be present at every convocation of the Chapter, and shall report any necessary absence, well in advance, to the Excellent High Priest.

Article XIII. DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Secretary to correspond with the candidates, officers, and other members of the Chapter and give them due and timely notice of all convocations or activities of the Chapter, under direction of the Excellent High Priest.
- (2) To cause the web site of the Chapter to be updated with current information. This ought to be done following each stated convocation.
- (3) To maintain the publications and literature of the Chapter, including brochures for potential candidates or affiliates, and study materials for the use of candidates as they progress through the degrees.

Article XIV. DUTIES OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Captain of the Host to supervise the organization of degree teams for the four degrees of Capitular Masonry under direction of the King.
- (2) To cause the officers to rehearse the opening and closing ceremonies of the Chapter until they have become proficient in the same.

Article XV. DUTIES OF THE PRINCIPAL SOJOURNER

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Principal Sojourner to oversee the preparation and clean-up the Chapter room for each convocation under direction of the Excellent High Priest.
- (2) To assist the officers in rehearsing the opening and closing ceremonies of the Chapter.

Article XVI. DUTIES OF THE ROYAL ARCH CAPTAIN

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Royal Arch Captain to supervising the instruction of the candidates in the lecture of each degree under direction of the King.
- (2) To have in his possession a copy of the candidate's lecture for each degree.
- (3) To speak out against the suggestion of any activity of the Chapter that does not have some legitimate Masonic Relevance as defined by Article III paragraph four (4).
- (4) To take charge over improving the ambiance of the Chapter room.
- (5) To advise the Craft against any behavior that might cause distraction or otherwise diminish the ability of our ceremonies to make a deep and lasting impression upon our candidates.

Article XVII. DUTIES OF THE THREE MASTERS OF THE VEILS

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Three Masters of the Veils to carry out the arrangements, preparation and clean-up of the Festive Board, under direction of the Scribe.
- (2) To judge the proficiency or other work presented by candidates for inspection as they progress through the degrees of Capitular Masonry, and to report their decision to the Excellent High Priest, always remembering to base their judgments upon the amount of effort, zeal, and dedication put into the work and not upon the level of technical skill demonstrated.

Article XVIII. DUTIES OF THE SENTINEL

- (1) It shall be the duty of the Sentinel to enforce the dress code of the Chapter as defined in Article V, under direction of the Excellent High Priest.

Article XIX. DUTIES OF EACH CANDIDATE

- (1) It shall be the duty of each candidate to attend every function which he is requested to attend, or to notify the Secretary and Excellent High Priest well in advance of any necessary absence.

- (2) To read the study guide provided to him before receiving the degree of Mark Master Mason, and the other study guides provided to him after receiving it and each subsequent degree.
- (3) After receiving each degree, to obtain from his appointed mentor a copy of the candidate's lecture and to meet with his mentor on a regular basis until the required level of proficiency has been attained.
- (4) To present a satisfactory specimen of his work (such as a research paper, lecture, or proficiency examination on the preceding degrees) before progressing to each degree, and another after receiving the Royal Arch Degree but before being appointed to any office in the Chapter.
- (5) As soon as is practical after receiving the Royal Arch Degree, to obtain the necessary items to be enabled to adhere to the dress code of the Chapter as defined in Article V.

Article XX. PERFORMANCE OF RITUAL

- (1) Every part of the ritual, whether conferral of a degree, or opening or closing for business, ought to be performed with reverence and respect, and no part of the ritual shall ever be rushed.
- (2) During the conferral of a degree, the Right Worshipful Master, or other officer, shall always remove his gloves before administering the obligation or giving the grip or grips of the degree to the candidate. During conferral of the Royal Arch Degree, all participating officers should also remove their gloves before the principal secrets of the degree are communicated.
- (3) When the ritual calls for us to "form a chain," the brethren or companions should remove their gloves, stand shoulder to shoulder, place their heels together, feet forming the angle of a square with the toe tips touching those of the brother on each side, join our hands as instructed, bow our heads, close our eyes, and concentrate in silent meditation on the intent of the Right Worshipful Master or Excellent High Priest. When he instructs us to "balance" we should raise and lower our arms, following his lead, using slow and deliberate motions, bringing our arms all the way up to the level of our chest, with no roughness or forcefulness at all. Many Traditional and European Concept bodies, including Symbolic Lodges, consider this to be an indispensable practice. It is referred to as "The Chain of Fraternal Union," and can also be found in the "Table Lodge #2" ritual (Form 757, page 68) available from the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Oregon.

Article XXI. BEHAVIOR AT THE FESTIVE BOARD

- (1) The Festive Board should be treated as an official event, and participation therein ought to be considered mandatory by every member of the Chapter.
- (2) During the Festive Board gloves shall be removed and the High Priest or Master may remove his hat, if desired, but the dress code shall otherwise remain in force.
- (3) Once called to order by the sound of the gavel, the Festive Board shall commence with a blessing over the meal, followed by toasts, and optional lectures, special music, and so forth, with order and decorum being maintained throughout the proceedings.
- (4) When the programmed portion of the meal has been completed, the Craft will be set at ease, and all may socialize freely until called back to order for the concluding toast.
- (5) The seven traditional toasts for Capitular Masonry are: 1st, to our Country; 2nd, to the Grand Lodge or Grand Master; 3rd, to the Grand Chapter or Grand High Priest; 4th, to this Chapter; 5th, to our Guests or Visiting Companions; 6th, to the Initiates; and the 7th and concluding toast, to all Ancient Masons, wheresoever Dispersed.

Article XXII. ANNUAL SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE

- (1) If the Chapter desires to perform an annual outdoor Royal Arch Degree at our July meeting, it would behoove us to adhere to a regular schedule for the progression of candidates. It is recommended that this Chapter’s cycle of degree work begin in August, and proceed as follows:

August Work Meeting.....Mark Master Mason *Degree Practice*—Outdoor.
September Work Meeting.....Mark Master Mason **Degree Conferral**—Outdoor.
October Stated Convocation...Royal Arch Proficiency from Last Year’s Candidates,
Election of Officers and Full Festive Board.
November Social Board.....*Table Mark Lodge* and Mark Master Proficiency.
December Work Meeting.....Past Master **Degree Conferral** and *Installation*.
January Stated Convocation....First Meeting with New Officers, Full Festive Board.
February Social Board.....Past Master Proficiency and Toasts.
March Work Meeting.....Most Excellent Master **Degree Conferral**.
April Stated Convocation.....Royal Arch *Degree Practice* and Toasts—Outdoor.
May Social.....Most Excellent Master Proficiency—Outdoor.
June Family Social.....*Family Picnic* and Oration—Outdoor.
July Stated Convocation.....Royal Arch **Degree Conferral** and BBQ—Outdoor.

- (2) It shall be the duty of each Companion to make his best effort to attend all scheduled meetings of the Chapter, including social boards and meetings for practice and degree conferral, unless excused by the Excellent High Priest, and to report any necessary absence, well in advance, to the High Priest or Secretary. In the case of absence due to an unexpected emergency or sudden illness, a report shall be made to the High Priest or Secretary by calling (541) 391-8316 as soon as possible. Good communication regarding absences will allow substitutions to be planned in advance without placing undue strain upon our Companions.

These “Guidelines for the Operation of the Chapter” were adopted at a Stated Convocation of Meridian Chapter, U.D., Royal Arch Masons of Oregon held on February 24, 2009.

Attested:

Excellent Companion Lawrence J. Stokes
High Priest of Meridian Chapter, U.D.
Royal Arch Masons of Oregon

Date